

“There is only One Primal Lord. It is known through the True Guru’s Grace.”

“Sikh the Truth”

An insight into Sikh Philosophy and Beliefs

“Let understanding be the anvil, and spiritual wisdom the tools.”

Guru Nanak Dev Ji

(GGSJ: Ang 8)

ALL PRAISE TO THE ALMIGHTY LORD, VAHEGURU!

To the Almighty, Merciful Lord, Akaal Purakh Vaheguru,
in whose *Hukam* (Will) and Power this publication was produced.
Blessed is the True Messenger of the True Lord, Guru Nanak, to whom the Divine
Understanding and Revelation was revealed.

*“As the understanding is given, so is one enlightened.
The Supreme Lord God, the Creator, is eternal and everlasting.
Forever, forever, and ever, He is merciful.
Remembering Him, remembering Him in meditation, O Nanak, one is blessed with ecstasy.”*
(GGSJ: Ang 275)

“There is only One Primal Lord. It is known through the True Guru’s Grace.”



The aim of this publication is to educate and raise awareness of the Sikh faith, its values and to put all myths and superstitions straight. This publication has been designed to educate Sikhs and non-Sikhs alike, about the Universal Truth and the Divine Teachings of the One Primal Beloved Lord, revealed through the founder of the Sikh faith, Guru Nanak. Guru Nanak was the embodiment of the Lord’s Divine Light, who came to this earth in 1469 to spread the Divine Message of God to not only the Sikhs, but to the whole of mankind.

As Bhai Gurdas Ji (an honoured leading Sikh scholar at the time of the Sikh Gurus) writes,

“With the emergence of the True Guru, Guru Nanak, the mist cleared and the light dispersed all around.

As if at the sunrise the stars disappeared and the darkness dispelled.”

(Bhai Gurdas Ji Vaaran: Ang 1)

This publication aims to explain the beliefs, general principles and practices of the Sikh faith. It also aims to promote Guru Nanak’s Divine Universal Message of spirituality, love, peace and harmony, but above all, the practice of the Divine Truth.

“Truth is the highest virtue but higher still is the truthful living.”

(GGSJ: Ang 62)

The publication aims to give a brief introduction into the philosophy behind Sikhism, the Ten Sikh Gurus and their teachings, the life a Sikh should follow, the life after death, the Gurdwara and its purpose, the importance of equality and the vital ceremonies in the life of a Sikh. This booklet also covers social topics such as abortion, homosexuality, euthanasia, suicide and abuse of intoxicants. It also aims to put forward the truth and beliefs about idol worship, superstitions, and also explain the important Sikh festivals.

It is hoped that this publication will bring a sense of understanding and appreciation for the Sikh faith and values, the Divine Teachings of the Sikh Gurus and the Divine Message that was meant for the whole of humanity.



Vaheguru Ji Ka Khalsa Vaheguru Ji Ki Fateh //
(The Khalsa belongs to the Lord. All Victory belongs to the Lord.)

“There is only One Primal Lord. It is known through the True Guru’s Grace.”

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SIKH DHARMA SIKH PHILOSOPHY AND BELIEFS



Sikhism is one of the youngest and most distinct world faiths, and is just over 500 years old. Despite being one of the youngest faiths, it is one of the fastest growing faiths of this day and age. Sikhism itself is one of the most beautiful faiths, which promotes humility, love of One Eternal God and all His creation, equality, righteousness, tolerance, peace and harmony.

The Sikh faith was brought to this world in the 15th century by Guru Nanak (1469-1534), the Messenger of God, who travelled through many parts of this world to spread the Divine Order, which was to practice the Truth and live a life of *Dharma* (righteous way of life). Guru Nanak was not concerned with religious traditions or rituals, but dealt with ethics of the mind and spirituality.

Guru Nanak clearly states within the Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji, that it was upon his call the Lord Himself bestowed the Divine Revelation to him:

“As the Word (Divine Revelation) of the Forgiving Lord comes to me, so do I express it, O Lalo.”

(GGSJ: Ang 722)

Guru Nanak brought a whole new way of life to the world, which was related to the spiritual uplift of mankind and the freedom of conscience and expression. Sikhism is based upon the Universal values of the Almighty True Lord, which promotes love for all beings upon this Earth, regardless of ones social status, gender, colour, caste or creed. It is a faith of equality amongst the whole of mankind, regardless of who you are, for these things do not matter in the eyes of the Lord.

*“By The Guru’s Divine Grace,
Look upon all with the same eye of equality,
As in every heart and soul,
The Lord’s light is contained within.”*

(GGSJ: Ang 598)

Sikhs believe there is One Universal Formless Lord, *Akaal Purkh* (The Eternal Lord), who has manifested Himself in all His creation by infusing His Light within everything (*Sargun* -

immanent). God is also seen as **Nirgun** (transcendent); He is above and beyond creation. He is forever pervading, He is without colour, mark or symbols, caste, form or shape, gender and has no family lineage. He is self-existent and is beyond description. So great is the True Lord, Vaheguru!

Guru Nanak showed the example of being a True devotee of the Lord, known as a Sikh, which literally means “learner”, derived from the Sanskrit word *sheesh* (student). A Sikh is a student, a disciple of Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji, the Eternal and Living Guru of the Sikhs. A Sikh is one who commits him/herself to the practice of the Truth and *Dharma* (righteousness) and the teachings of the Sikh Gurus through Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji. This Sikh then becomes a *Gurmukh*; one whose face is towards the direction of the Guru. By leading a life as the *Gurmukh*, only then is one able to obtain spiritual bliss and union with the Lord God.

Sikhism teaches that salvation and spiritual bliss can only be obtained through self-realisation of the Lord and meditating upon His Name with complete devotion. In order for a Sikh to understand this way of life, one must abolish all egos and focus upon their inner soul. This understanding can only come from following the teachings of Guru Nanak, accepting God’s Will and that this world is nothing but a dream. We must accept the Divine Order that everything in this world is temporal. The remembrance of the Lord will gradually lead one to this self-realisation of the Divine Truth that God actually lives within them. The Lord’s Name is metaphorically seen as a ship, which ferries one across this disastrous worldly ocean that the world is drowning in. This self-realisation needs to exist within the power of your actions, the creativity of your consciousness; what you do and how you act upon them. We are responsible for our own actions. Self-realisation allows one to experience permanent inner peace and allows them to see God within all beings.

Sikhism rejects any form of idol worship, ritual baths and practices, fasting and leading a life as a hermit in order to reach salvation. Sikhs believe that adhering to these practices will not bring one closer to God and neither will it make one grow spiritually stronger. Rather it diverts one from the actual point of being on this earth and leads one into spiritual darkness. It is through the *Shabad* (the Lord’s Divine Revelation revealed through Guru Nanak) that one can discover the Truth and gain union with the Primal Lord. Guru Nanak promoted the philosophy of love, devotion, self-service and charity.

His three golden philosophies were:-

- ❖ **Naam Japna:** meditate upon the One Formless Lord, for this is the highest and purest form of worship.
- ❖ **Vandh ke Chhaknaa:** Share a tenth of your earnings with the deprived. This also applies to one’s spirituality. A Sikh is required to spread and share the teachings of the Sikh Gurus as well.
- ❖ **Kirat Karna:** lead an honest and earnest living.

Sikhs believe that there are many barriers that the Lord has purposely created, which block the path to salvation and liberation from the cycle of births and deaths. It is a duty of the Sikh to fight against these barriers through inner cleansing of meditation upon the Lord’s Name. *Maya* is

a primal example given to Sikhs, which is an illusion or a materialistic view of the world, which mankind is easily deluded and weakened by. This leads to spiritual ignorance of the Lord's Divine Revelation and *Hukam* (the Will of God).

Additionally, being self-centred is not ideal for a Sikh, for it distracts the individual from the point of being on this earth and causes one to forget the Lord in meditation. We claim that something that has happened, or is in the Will of God, is something that 'we' have done. Rather a Sikh should accept that everything that happens is in accordance to the Will of God and is part of His Divine Order.

The *Panj Chor*, which are known as the "five thieves" of the body when literally translated, are barriers that restrict one on the path to salvation. The *Panj Chor* are ***Kaam*** (Lust), ***Krodh*** (Anger), ***Lobh*** (Greed), ***Moh*** (Attachment), and ***Hankar*** (Pride).

Sikhism teaches that these five thieves, which remain with us until the time of death, affect our *Karma*, our actions on whether we will be liberated from the cycle of births and deaths or not. The world falsely befriends the five thieves, which lead to terrible pain and anxiety at the time of death, when the individual forgets the Lord.

By indulging or allowing these five thieves to take over the mind, one begins to lose control and consciousness of the mind and soul, which consequently affects the course of ones, *Karma*. However, the Guru teaches the Sikh that the five thieves can be restrained by meditating upon the Name of the Lord with complete devotion and dedication. The Lord's name acts as a defence against these five thieves by seizing them and deflecting any negativity experienced.

"Through the Divine Word of the Lord's Revelation, they conquer the five thieves."

(GGSJ: Ang 230)

These five thieves are said to be led by a more ultimate power within us - *Haumai* (Ego). *Hau-mai* literally means 'me-I' indicating this idea of duality, that 'I' am apart from God. The idea of 'I' falsely gives the person the feeling that they have their own individual power, which ultimately entraps them within *Maya's* hold. This ego is a barrier that we have created between ourselves and God. For this barrier to close, we must feed our soul positive energy, which is found through the power of meditation.

Through the remembrance of the True Lord, obtained through meditation and the understanding of *Gurbaani* (Guru's scriptures), we can destroy this ego and merge with the Lord.

"The Shabad is excellent and sublime, kind and generous like the Lord, the Destroyer of Egotism."

(GGSJ: Ang 1407)



GURU NANAK (1469-1539)



***“Guru Nanak Dayv is the Embodiment of the Lord of the Universe.”
(GGSJ: Ang 1192)***

Some 200 years before the birth of Guru Nanak, India was subjected to ruthless and brutal attacks by Mughal extremists, who plunged the hearts of thousands of civilians. People were terrorised, brutally murdered, and places of worships and homes were destroyed. It became a society which crumbled into the hands of corruption and religious bigotry.

Although Sikhism came into existence at this extremely turbulent period between the Hindu and Muslim people, the teachings and beliefs of Sikhism remain distinct. There is a common misconception that the teachings of Sikhism are made up of elements and ideologies from Hinduism and Islam. This is somewhat misleading and inaccurate. Though there are some similarities between the religions, the teachings of Guru Nanak depict the hypocrisies and religious intolerances found within these two religions; thus bringing the Ultimate Truth of oneness and equality amongst mankind.

It was in 1469, in the town of Talwandi (Nankana Sahib) now in Pakistan that Guru Nanak, the Divine Messenger of the Lord, was sent to this earth to remove all darkness and fear, and to bring the enlightenment of the Divine Revelation in this dark age of Kaljug.

Bhai Gurdas Ji writes,

***“The Benefactor Lord listened to the cries (of humanity) and sent Guru Nanak to this world.”
(Bhai Gurdas Ji Vaaran, Pg.1)***

Guru Nanak was a householder, who was married to *Mata Sulakhani* and was blessed with two sons, *Baba Sri Chand Ji* and *Baba Lakhmi Das Ji*. Born in a Hindu family, Guru Nanak rejected the meaningless ritual practices and superstitions. Guru Nanak exposed the contradictions, the religious hypocrisies and practices, casting aside the social class, and prejudices amongst the Hindus. Guru Nanak never called himself a Hindu, and neither did he associate himself with the false practices and worship of Hindu deities.

As the Sikh faith was founded in the northern region of India, Sikhism was heavily surrounded by Hindu mythology and philosophy, which was also a central part of ancient Indian history, traditions and cultural beliefs. Some of Guru Nanak's compositions, as well as many of the other Sikh Gurus and saints compositions make references to Hindu mythology, as examples and parallels to depict the falsehood and hypocrisies that exist within the ideologies and deities.

Furthermore, Guru Nanak challenged the intolerance of fanatic Muslims during his time in Mecca, where he made them aware that Allah is all pervading, not just in the direction of the *Kaaba*. Guru Nanak provided guidelines and frameworks for the Muslims at the time to fulfil their practices as true Muslims and to accept that Allah exists in all. God does not hate or bare enmity with anyone. The paths to God may be different; however, they all wish to unite with the Lord as an end result. There is no difference.

***“The Muslim God Allah and the Hindu God Paarbrahm-are One and the same.”
(GGSJ: Ang 896)***

It is the practice of the Divine Truth and committing good deeds that one is blessed with the treasures of salvation with the Lord.

It was in 1497 when Guru Nanak received his Divine Call, whilst bathing in the River Bayeni. Guru Nanak disappeared within the river and reappeared the third day. Guru Nanak spoke of his encounter with the Lord and explained that he had received a Divine Call from the Lord. He was chosen to spread the Divine Message of the Lord to the world and received the Divine Revelation of the *Mool Mantar*.

Guru Nanak talks about his experience when he received the Divine Call within the Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji and what happened when he came face to face with the Lord.

***“I was a minstrel, out of work, when the Lord took me into His service.
To sing His Praises day and night, He gave me His Order, right from the start.
My Lord Master has summoned me, His minstrel, to the True Mansion of His Presence.
He has dressed me in the robes of His True Praise and Glory.
The Ambrosial Nectar of the True Name has become my food.
His minstrel spreads His Glory, singing and vibrating the Word of His Divine Revelation.
O Nanak, praising the True Lord, I have obtained His Perfection. ||27||Sudh||”
(GGSJ: Ang 150)***

Guru Nanak declared to the people that there is no Hindu and there is no Muslim. Guru Nanak spoke that there are many religious hypocrisies and contradictions. Nobody is actually acting upon the Word of the Prophet, yet claim to be good Muslims and Hindus. Very few speak the truth and very few follow the Divine Truth. God is one; for Muslims He is Allah and for the Hindus, he is Raam. We are all brothers, who belong to the same Lord; there is no difference between us. To be a good Muslim or to be a good Hindu, then one must enshrine the Lord's Name and the Word of the Prophet in their hearts.

***“By being a Hindu or Muslim, one cannot get accepted in the Court of the Lord.
As the colour of Safflower is impermanent and is washed away in water, likewise the colours of
religiosity are also temporary.”
(Bhai Gurdas Ji Vaaran, Pg. 1)***

Guru Nanak set the foundations of a faith, a way of life, which promoted love and equality amongst the whole of humanity, for we are all equal in the eyes of the Lord, regardless of what social status, colour, creed, sex and religion we belong to. It was a faith which accepted that everything operates under the power and Will of the Lord. Immersing oneself in meaningless rituals and superstitions cannot alter what the Lord has already pre-ordained. It would be a faith which focused solely on the love and worship of One Eternal Lord.

“Guru Nanak laid the Immovable foundation, which grows higher and higher each day.”

(GGSJ: Ang 500)

Guru Nanak travelled to many places around the world by foot to spread the Divine Message of God. Guru Nanak carried out four extensive journeys around the world. These extensive journeys led him to as far as Sri Lanka, Tibet, Nepal, Bhutan, South West China, Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Israel, Turkey, Jordan, Syria, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and almost the whole of India.

Guru Nanak preached against and challenged the religious hypocrisies and practices of that time and brought a complete new dimension of hope and optimism to the entire world.

“Guru Nanak is the greatest of all; He saved my honour in this Dark Age of Kaljug.”

(GGSJ: Ang 750)



THE TEN SIKH DIVINE MESSENGERS



***“The Shabad (Word of God) is excellent and sublime, kind and generous like the Lord,
the Destroyer of Egotism.”
(GGSJ: Ang 1407)***

Sikhism teaches that there is One Eternal Lord, who has revealed Himself through the life and teachings of Guru Nanak (the Messenger of God and the founder of the Sikh faith). God Himself sent Guru Nanak into the Dark Age of *Kaljug* to spread the Divine Truth and Revelation, to save this world from the burning pangs of falsehood and to practice the Ultimate Truth.

The other nine human successors (*Guru Angad Dev Ji, Guru Amar Das Ji, Guru Raam Das Ji, Guru Arjan Dev Ji, Guru Har Gobind Sahib Ji, Guru Har Rai Sahib Ji, Guru Har Krishan Ji, Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji* and *Guru Gobind Singh Ji*) also conveyed the same message that Guru Nanak was bestowed with, which was to preach the message of love, tolerance, harmony and social equality centred upon the worship of One God. Although the physical body may have changed, the one Divine Light remained the same.

The Gurus are not seen as an incarnation of God nor does Sikhism believe in the theory of incarnation. Sikhs believe that without a Messenger or Prophet, one is not able to fully understand God. A Prophet or Messenger is one who brings lightness into the world and dispels all evil and falsehood.

It is through the Messenger or Prophet that one's understanding, thoughts, feelings, attitudes and perceptions of the world are shaped. Most world religions or faiths have been started by some Prophet or Messenger (i.e. Moses, Jesus, Buddha or Mohammad), who is believed to have been sent by the Lord on a mission to spread peace and harmony, but above all to spread the Divine Revelation and Truth about God. As the Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji explains:

***“Without the Guru, there is utter darkness; without the Guru, understanding is not obtained.
Without the Guru, there is no intuitive awareness or success; without the Guru, there is no
liberation.”
(GGSJ: Ang 1399)***

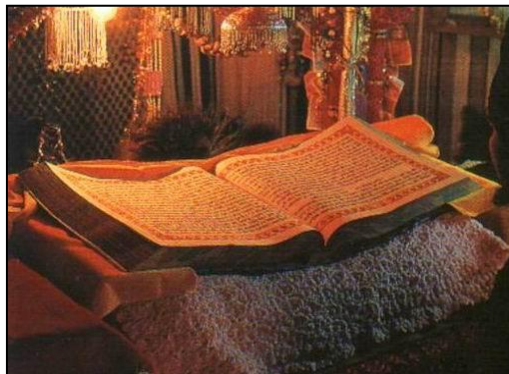
The Sikh Gurus were not worshipped; they were treated with great reverence because they were blessed with the Divine Grace and Light of the Lord and were able to guide people on the path of salvation, as ordained by the Divine Order. It was the One Divine Light within that Sikhs bowed

their heads to.

As the Divine Light passed from one to the next, the previous was treated with great reverence. Guru Gobind Singh Ji (The Tenth Embodiment) finally passed the Light to Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji (Sikh scriptures), which he pronounced as the Eternal Guru of all Sikhs in 1708.

The Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji (Holy Sikh scriptures), which is now the existing Divine Light of the Lord and the Eternal Guru of all Sikhs is the embodiment of the ten Sikh Gurus. The Divine Light is still One, for the Lord is One.

Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji is a guide to holy living and reminding us of the worship of One God. Sikhs prostrate before Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji in reverence to the Shabad (Divine Revelation), not as idol worshipping, but to understand and connect with the Ultimate Truth.



Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji (The Divine Revelation)
1708-everlasting Guru of the Sikhs

- ❖ The Supreme Truth and the Divine Revelation of God

***“The Divine Word of His Revelation emanated from the Primal Lord.
It eradicates all anxiety.”
(GGSJ: Ang 628)***

- ❖ The only universal scripture compiled by the Prophets themselves
- ❖ The most unique sacred scriptures, which promotes love, peace, harmony and equality to the whole of humanity
- ❖ A composition of 1430 *Angs*, consisting of hymns by Guru Nanak Dev Ji (974 hymns in total), Guru Angad Dev Ji (63 hymns in total), Guru Amar Das Ji (869 hymns in total), Guru Ram Das Ji (638 hymns in total), Guru Arjan Dev Ji (2312 hymns in total), Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji (116 hymns in total)
- ❖ A message which breaks the barriers of discrimination and inequalities within mankind

- ❖ Contains compositions of Saints and Sufis of other religions, castes and cultures (i.e. Hindu and Muslim) and Sikhs of the Guru of that time
- ❖ First installed as the *Aad Granth* in 1604 at Sri Harmandar Sahib, Amritsar by the 5th Guru, Guru Arjan Dev Ji
- ❖ Proclaimed as *Guru Granth Sahib Ji*, the living embodiment of the 10 Sikh Gurus in 1708 at Takhat Sachkhand Sri Hazoor Sahib, Nanded by the 10th Guru, Guru Gobind Singh Ji
- ❖ A scripture, which offers advice, support and love
- ❖ A scripture which promotes unity, regardless of caste, creed, colour and social status
- ❖ Contains hymns, pleasing to the mind and soul and spiritually uplifting



SRI DASAM GRANTH ~ SRI SARBLOH GRANTH



The *Dasam Granth* is the second most revered scripture of the Sikhs and is an entire compilation of diverse writings by the Tenth Sikh Master, Guru Gobind Singh Ji. The *Dasam Granth* plays a key part in everyday Sikh practices, where the compositions are used in daily prayers, supplication to the Lord and during the Sikh baptism ceremony.

“The Granth was completed on Sunday, the 18th day of the month of Bhadon, in 1753 Bikrami, Sammar (September 1696 A.D) on the banks of the River Sutlej.”

(Dasam Granth: Charitopakhyan)

Unfortunately, most of the writings were lost during the crossing of the River Sirsa, before the Battle of *Chamkaur* in 1705. It was then under the command of *Mata Sundri* (wife of Guru Gobind Singh Ji) that *Bhai Mani Singh*, a devout Sikh of the Guru should gather and compile the works of the Tenth Master into a single volume. The 1428 page volume was compiled in 1721 and became known as the *Sri Dasam Granth*.

The *Dasam Granth* is an extraordinary, poetical composition, with various rhythmic styles and structures. The *Granth* is largely written in *Braj Bhasha*, but also consists of Persian, Farsi, Arabic and Sanskrit.

The *Dasam Granth* reflects the vast knowledge, intellect and valour of Guru Gobind Singh Ji. The *Granth* explores and depicts the world in which we live in and how it is being enticed by false rituals and hypocrisies, thus leading us astray from the Divine Truth and faith within the Primal Lord. Guru Gobind Singh Ji praises the Lord throughout the compositions and enforces that there is no other that is as great or parallel to the Divine Lord. Furthermore, Guru Gobind Singh Ji gives a description of battles and weapons and rules of warfare, the inadequacies in the male and female characters, and extensive religious knowledge, with an outline of all the false practices and disregard of the Hindu deities and their authenticity.

As the *Guru Granth Sahib Ji* (the Divine Revelation of God) evokes the spirit of being a saint, the *Dasam Granth* evokes the spirit of being a warrior and installs the spirit of warfare. Both *Granth*s are recognized as the same light and in relation to one another.

“[Recognize] one as larger [brother, which is Adi Granth] and the one as smaller [brother, Dasam Granth].”

~

The *Sarbloh Granth* (the scripture of all iron) is the third most revered scripture of the Sikhs and is another compilation of Guru Gobind Singh Ji. It is believed that this *Granth* was compiled by Guru Gobind Singh Ji in his previous life as *Dusht Daman* at *Hemkunt Sahib* and was reclaimed by the Guru in this life. Guru Gobind Singh Ji updated and extended this *Granth* with further compositions to 862 pages.

The *Sarbloh Granth* is an extensive poem that recites the stories of gods and demons. It also summaries and reflects upon the previous scriptures of other faiths too. It carries similar characteristics to the *Dasam Granth*, where the essence and spirit of warfare is evoked.



SIKHISM AND SPIRITUAL BLISS: PRAYER AND MEDITATION



For Sikhs, prayer and meditation plays a central part in the worship of God. The teachings within Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji provide a framework for Sikhs on how they should live a meaningful and spiritual life. The only command within Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji is *Jap*, which means to contemplate (upon the name of the Lord). Through meditation, Sikhs believe one is able to achieve absolute bliss and attain union with the Lord.

Prayer for Sikhs brings fulfilment and everlasting peace to the mind and soul. When one begins to fixate their mind upon the lotus feet of the Lord and contemplate upon the *Gurmantar*, *Vaheguru* (O Wonderful Lord), known as *Naam Simran*, (the chanting of the Lord's Name) they enter a spiritual realm of tranquillity. Meditation proves to remove all anxieties and obstacles, detachment from everything, such as the world and materialistic illusions, which the whole world is entangled by. As a result of meditating the soul begins to yearn for the Lord through complete devotion.

Prayer emphasises the sacred relationship and union between the Lord and the soul. The individual becomes less *Manmukh* (self-centred) and more *Gurmukh* (God-centred), wherein prayer acts as a tool of eradicating *Haumeh* (ego) and elevates the consciousness of the mind to the realm of spirituality and the Truth, known as *Sach Khand*, where the Lord resides.

Sikhs believe that the human body has nine doors or opening passages (one reproductive passage, the anus, one mouth, two eyes, two nostrils and two ears) and the highest opening or passage of them all is the *Dasam Dwar*, the tenth gate or door, hidden and situated on top of the head. This is said to be the Realm of Truth. During meditation the mind will gradually become absorbed by the chanting of the Lord's Name and one will begin to experience a burning sensation between their eyes and forehead, known as the *Trikutee* (the third eye). That is in fact one's *swaas* (breathing) travelling upwards to the *Dasam Dwaar*. The force or energy of one's meditation will cause the *Dasam Dwar* to open and the *Shabad-Dhun* (the spiritual sound) of the Lord's court will begin to vibrate within us.

The soul is then said to have become one and united with the Lord. An emotional self-realisation is then brought by the Lord's Grace, where the soul has been separated from the Lord for many

births. The Sikh Gurus have outlined that the only way the soul can be liberated from the cycle of birth and death and to achieve absolute union with the Lord is through meditation. Through meditation the Truth can be obtained and revealed to those who are dedicated and devoted to the Truth.

A Sikh is committed to recite a number of *Baania* (prayers), known as *Nitnem* (daily prayers), which are designed to personally relate and connect with the soul, bringing absolute peace and satisfaction. Throughout these prayers, the Gurus emphasise on the importance of meditation and the worship of One God, which outline a spiritual discipline for a Sikh to follow. The *Baania* symbolise the spiritual communication between the soul and the Lord.

Each *Baani* is written in consecutive *pauria* (steps or stanzas), which are symbolic, as they symbolise that the Guru is moving one up the spiritual ladder and causing us to progress and become spiritually stronger. They provide guidance and blissful calmness to the mind and soul.

The five *Baania* that are recited during the period of *Amritvela* (the ambrosial period of the morning, before sunrise) are as follows:

Jap Ji Sahib: This is a composition by Guru Nanak Dev Ji. The Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji begins with the *Jap Ji*, which contains the *Mool Mantar* (the Divine Revelation given by God):

“There is the One Universal Creator Lord of all. His Name is the Eternal Truth. He is the Supreme Creator, whose light is embodied in all of His creation. He has no Fear, Neither does he have hatred for anyone. He is Immortal, Beyond Birth, He is Self-Existent. He is realised through the Grace of the True Guru.”

(GGSJ: Ang 1)

The *Jap Ji Sahib* is a prayer designed for the whole of humanity, irrespective of one's religious beliefs. It describes the spiritual journey that the individual enters, known the *Panj Khand* (the five realms of spirituality), what is a righteous and truthful way of living and how to obliterate falsehood.

Furthermore, the Guru takes the individual along the path of realisation, understanding of the many cosmos and the realm of knowledge of the Divine Truth. The Guru speaks about karma; it is through righteous deeds that one can achieve complete union with the Lord and salvation, for one's karma determines what is going to happen next.

Jaap Sahib: This is a composition by Guru Gobind Singh Ji. The *Jaap Sahib* talks of the countless names that the Lord has and the praises and limitless qualities He has. He is seen through the eyes of Guru Gobind Singh Ji, who says He is the Ultimate Truth, without colour, gender, caste, creed and family lineage. He is the creator, preserver and destroyer of all His creation. There is no-one parallel to the Lord, for He is so profound and deep. The title *Jaap Sahib* is so unique, for when the word is broken into two syllables, it reads *Jaa* (which means ‘go’ in Punjabi) and *aap* (which means ‘yourself’ in Punjabi). The purpose of this is to reinforce the message that the individual must let go of their entire ego and let themselves become one with the *Shabad* or Truth.

TavPrasaad Svaiye: This is another composition of Guru Gobind Singh Ji. This *Baani* is for the true believers of One God, which talks of many saints, gods and goddesses who have failed to understand the worship and the greatness of the Lord. Guru Gobind Singh Ji talks of the countless useless rituals and ceremonies, worshipping idols and dead people, and the empty recitation of religious books, which people falsely believe will bring them closer to God. The

Guru has outlined within this *Baani* that none of these practices will be any avail to a Sikh for they do not practice the Divine Truth.

Chaupae Sahib: This is another composition of Guru Gobind Singh Ji. This *Baani* is a personal prayer to seek the Lord's protection and to liberate the soul. The prayer is to destroy all fears that one may have and the destruction of sinful enemies and tyrants. The *Baani* discusses the foolish souls, who believe that the Lord is contained in a stone and worship them blindly thinking they will reach salvation. The Guru is emphasising that the worship of the One Formless Lord will liberate one from the cycle of births and deaths.

Anand Sahib: This is a composition of Guru Amar Das Ji. This *Baani* brings happiness, spiritual bliss and harmony to the mind and soul. The *Baani* talks of many cosmos, the truth about the mind and body and how the soul can be saved from the cycle of births and deaths.

Evening Prayers (recited after sunset):

Rehras Sahib: This is a collection of hymns by Guru Nanak Dev Ji, Guru Amar Das Ji (Anand Sahib), Guru Raam Das Ji, Guru Arjan Dev Ji and Guru Gobind Singh Ji (Chaupae Sahib). This *Baani* talks of the numerous gods and goddesses, angels and prophets, who all sing the praises of the Lord. Furthermore, the Gurus talk of the greatness of the Lord, who cannot be made greater by mere words. The Gurus praise those who have great love in their hearts for One Eternal Lord and who practice the truth. They are blessed and have great destinies. This prayer is also designed to thank the Lord for the day.

Keertan Sohila: This is a collection of hymns by Guru Nanak Dev Ji, Guru Raam Das Ji and Guru Arjan Dev Ji. This prayer is read before going to bed, in order to bring peace to the mind and soul and to banish the fear of death, which will come to everyone. This prayer also eliminates any negative thoughts or any bad dreams that you may experience. It is also designed to guard your soul to protect it when it leaves the body at the time of death.



SIKHISM AND WORSHIP THE GURDWARA



“Through the Gurdwara, the Guru’s Door, He gives, and quenches the thirst.”

(GGSJ: Ang 933)

The Sikh place of worship is called a *Gurdwara*, which literally means “The Door of the Guru”. The Gurdwara plays an important part in the life of every Sikh as the focal point of worship is the Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji, the Sikh Holy Scriptures, which contains the Divine Revelation given by God to Guru Nanak, the founder of the Sikh faith.

All are allowed to visit the Gurdwara and pay their respects or offer their prayers to the Guru, irrespective of one's caste, colour, creed, gender or social status. The Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji is seated on a high pedestal from the rest of the *Sangat* (congregation), who sit on the floor below facing towards the Guru. The concept of sitting on the floor symbolises and emphasises that all worshippers who have come to the House of the Guru are equal; no-one is superior to another. It reinforces the attitude of humility and equality.

On entering the *Darbar Sahib* (the prayer hall), one walks in the direction towards the Guru, which symbolises the concept that when one is on the path of the Guru, the Guru will lead them on the path of spiritual enlightenment and save them from the overshadowing darkness of falsehood. One prostrates before the Guru in reverence to the Divine Revelation, which lies at the heart of every Sikh. It is believed that when a Sikh's forehead touches the lotus feet of the Guru, thousands of sins are washed away. Within the *Darbar Sahib* a number of services prayers, festivals and sacred ceremonies (i.e. marriage, funerals, continuous readings of the Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji, etc) are performed.

Within the Gurdwara one will find the *Langar* (derived from Persian, which means ‘an asylum for the poor and the destitute’) or *Gur-Ka-Langar*, a kitchen which serves free food to the congregation, regardless of one's colour, caste or creed and creating social equality amongst all. The *Langar* was encouraged by the third Guru, Guru Amar Das Ji as an act of self-service, which is central to the practice of Sikhism.

Seva, which is selfless service to the Guru and the congregation is encouraged and is considered to be a way of washing away one's own sins and serving others regardless of who they are. Both men and women are equally allowed to take part in *seva*.

Outside each Gurdwara a *Nishaan Sahib*, an orange or blue flag with a *Khanda* (a double-edged sword) is erected outside each and every Gurdwara. The *Nishaan Sahib* symbolises the temporal and spiritual (*Miri* and *Piri*) aspect of every Sikhs life, which was reinforced by the sixth Guru, Guru Har Gobind Sahib Ji.

Things to be aware of before entering the Gurdwara:

- ❖ Make sure you have **not** consumed any meat, fish or eggs and alcohol or any other form of intoxicant, such as illegal drugs or tobacco. Sikhs believe in keeping the body free from intoxicants, for this affects the point of concentration and the consciousness of the mind negatively.
- ❖ Have a bath before coming to the Gurdwara, as cleanliness plays an important part in Sikhism.
- ❖ Cover your head with some form of a headscarf or bandana. Do **not** wear a cap.
- ❖ Remove shoes and socks and place them on the shoe rack before entering the *Darbar Sahib*.
- ❖ Wash your hands and feet.



HOW THE WORLD WAS CREATED



Like many of the world religions, the Sikh faith accepts that there is One, All-Knowing Supreme Divinity, which has created this entire universe, thus infusing His Divine Light within all His creation. Guru Nanak Dev Ji reveals within the Divine Revelation that the purpose and reason for the creation of the universe and all that exists within can only be understood by the Lord. It is He alone who understands the inner nature of all and it is by His Command that the entire creation was fashioned and shall be destroyed by Him only.

“The Creator created the World, He alone understands it.

He Himself created the Universe, and He Himself shall destroy it afterwards.”

(GGSJ: Ang 787)

We have to accept that the universe serves a purpose, which is beyond the understanding of the human mind, for the human mind can only reveal limited experiences. All who exist on this earth and beyond have been assigned individual tasks as part of the Divine Order. Everything we do, speak or act upon has already been pre-ordained by the Lord.

Guru Nanak declares that everything begins to exist and ceases through the Will of God. We act in accordance to the Will of God. Without the Will and Order there would be no reality; for there to be reality there needs to be a Divine Order. Whatever pleases the Lord, the Lord does. The Lord is forever the Eternal Truth.

“True in the Primal Beginning. True through the Ages.

True here and now. O Nanak, forever and ever True.”

(GGSJ: Ang 1)

The Semitic scriptures reveal that the earth was shapeless and covered in darkness. The Lord then created light, water and vegetation. Having created the heavens and the earth, the Lord then created all living things. Similarly, the Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji reveals that before the existence of anything, there was complete and utter darkness and the Lord was alone in solitary meditation.

“For endless eons, there was only utter darkness.

There was no earth or sky; there was only the infinite Command of His Will.

*There was no day or night; no moon or sun; God sat in His primal, profound meditative pose.”
(GGSJ: Ang 1035)*

When the time came, the Lord created all that was hidden in manifestation. With just One Word, the Lord willed the entire universe.

*“You created the vast expanse of the Universe with just One Word,
Hundreds of thousands of rivers began to flow.”
(GGSJ: Ang 3)*

From the utterance of One Word, Guru Nanak reveals that the Lord then infused His Light into the dust, and created the entire world and universe. Everything the Lord has created; he is all-pervading and permeating in that creation.

*“The Lord infused His Light into the dust, and created the world, the universe.
The sky, the earth, the trees and the water-all are the creation of the Lord.”
(GGSJ: Ang 723)*

Furthermore, the Divine Revelation reveals an account of how the world came into existence:

*“He Himself created Himself; He Himself understands Himself.
Separating the sky and the earth, He has spread out His canopy.
Without any pillars, He supports the sky, through the symbol of His Divine Revelation He
Himself manifested.
On creating the sun and the moon, He infused His Light into them.
He created the night and the day; wondrous are His astounding plays.
He created the sacred shrines of pilgrimage, where people contemplate righteousness and
faith, and take baths on special occasions.
There is no other equal to You; how can we speak and describe You?
You are eternally seated upon the throne of Truth; all others come and go in rebirth. ||1||”
(GGSJ: Ang 1279)*

Guru Granth Sahib Ji, the Divine Revelation of God, reveals that the human form was formed from dust and the five elements that the universe was created from (ether, air, water, fire and earth). Bhai Gurdas Ji explains in detail how the Lord fashioned the human body and the process it was developed.

*“First of all, when no breath and body was there nothing was visible in the pitch darkness.
The body was created through the blood (of mother) and semen (of father) and the five
elements were joined judiciously.
Air, water, fire and earth were put together.
The fifth element sky (void) was kept in between and the creator God, the sixth one, invisibly
permeated among all.
To create the human body, five elements and twenty five qualities opposite to each other were
joined and mixed.*

Four life originating mines (egg, foetus, sweat born, and vegetation) and four speeches (para, pasyanti, madhyama, vaikhari) were assimilated into each other and the drama of transmigration was enacted.

Thus eighty four lacs of species were created. (2)”

(Bhai Gurdas Ji Vaaran: Pannaa 1)

Unlike the Semitic religions, Sikhism does not follow the myth that Adam was necessarily the first human being created by God or the fact that Eve was created from the rib of Adam. If Eve was created from the rib of Adam, then this contradicts the theory of conception completely. Sikhism does agree that the Lord fashioned the body from clay/dust, as the Semitic religions agree that Adam, being the first of the human species, was created from dust. From creating the human form, further offspring was created through the blood of the mother and semen of the father.

“Through the union of mother and father, the foetus is formed.

The egg and sperm join together to make the body.”

(GGSJ: Ang 1013)

For Sikhs, the mysteries that lay within the existence and the creation of the human race can only be understood by the Lord.

Guru Nanak also reveals that during his call, the Lord revealed countless worlds, planets, solar systems, nether regions, universes, galaxies and different existences of life that we have not yet discovered.

“There are nether worlds beneath nether worlds, and hundreds of thousands of heavenly worlds above.”

(GGSJ: Ang 5)

Within the *Jap Ji Sahib*, Guru Nanak challenges the Hindu revelation of the universe, which is believed to be resting upon the back of a mythical bull. Guru Nanak argues, if the world rests upon the back of a bull, then what is holding that bull?

“The mythical bull is Dharma, the son of compassion.

This is what patiently holds the earth in its place.

One who understands this becomes truthful.

What a great load there is on the bull!

So many worlds beyond this world-so very many!

What power hold and supports their weight?”

(GGSJ: Ang 3)

Guru Nanak reveals that the Lord Himself sustains and supports the entire universe by Himself. It is in His Command that the world was created and it shall merge with Him once it ends.

“By His Order, He established the earth, and He maintains it unsupported.

By His Order, the world was created; by His Order, it shall merge again into Him.”

(GGSJ: Ang 276)



THE EQUALITY OF MANKIND



“All the human beings, as a species, are recognised as one and the same.”

(Sri Dasam Granth)

An underlying influence on Sikh philosophy is the belief in the oneness of humanity, which leads to an emphasis on the equality of all, regardless of one's sex, colour, caste and creed. Guru Nanak first spoke of equality during the time he was exposed to an environment where there was great prejudice, social, gender and caste discrimination.

The Gurus all rejected the classifications that were made. We are to see God both inside ourselves and the environment that we live in. God has infused Himself in all His creation; therefore we should not differentiate between anything or treat anyone any differently.

Guru Nanak and Guru Amar Das Ji in particular demolished the inequalities between both men and women and saved women from the social oppressions and religious bigotries of that time. In one of his hymns, Guru Nanak extensively writes about the beauty of the woman's creation.

“From woman, man is born; within woman, man is conceived; to woman he is engaged and married. Woman becomes his friend; through woman, the future generations develop. When his wife dies, he searches for another woman; to a woman he is bound.

So why call her bad? From her, kings are born. From a woman, a woman is born; without a woman, there would be no one at all.

O Nanak, only the True Lord is without a woman.”

(GGSJ: Ang 473)

A woman is considered to have the same soul as a man and has an equal right to grow spiritually, thus giving freedom of conscience and expression for both sexes. The Gurus gave women the fullest responsibility on all spiritual and social matters and regarded women in every way equal in the eyes of God.

Guru Amar Das Ji carried out dynamic movements against the most deplorable practices of *Sati* (the Hindu custom of widows, who at the time were expected to throw themselves onto their

husbands funeral pyre) and female infanticide, which was predominate during this time. Furthermore, Sikh women are also not expected to wear religious garbs, such as the Burqa or Hijab to conceal themselves.

Additionally, *Langar* was developed by Guru Amar Das Ji to work towards systematically abolishing social status, caste and colour and instilling the concept of equality amongst all mankind.

Furthermore, the '*Amrit Sanchar*' (Sikh baptism ceremony) involves the drinking of sweet nectar from the same bowl as others. Again this symbolises abolishing the barriers of distinction and recognising all as equal.

Lastly the Sri Harmandar Sahib (other known as the Golden Temple) in Amritsar symbolically has four doors, facing the four corners of the world, reinforcing that all are welcome. The House of God is open to all, regardless of one's colour, caste, creed or gender. Symbolically all walk along the same path towards the main opening door of the Sri Harmandar Sahib, which reinforces that all can meet God together.

Sikhism is a faith which promotes equality, tolerance and acceptance, irrespective of one's colour, culture or social status.



JANAM SANSKAR (THE BIRTH CEREMONY)



*“Chanting the Name of the Lord, and meditating on it within the fire of the womb, your life is sustained by dwelling on the Name of the Lord.
You are born and you come out, and your mother and father are delighted to see your face.”
(GGSJ: Ang76)*

There are many ceremonies that Sikhs have been blessed with in order to live a peaceful and meaningful life upon the instruction of the Guru. These have been set in place to provide protection, happiness and guidance. The ceremonies have been created to ensure that the child maintains its love and consciousness upon the Lord and to initiate the child towards a secular and spiritual path of the Sikh lifestyle.

There are four main ceremonies that take place within a Sikh's life:

- ❖ *Janam Sanskar*- The Birth Ceremony
- ❖ *Amrit Sanskar*- The Baptism Ceremony
- ❖ *Anand Karaj*- The Marriage Ceremony
- ❖ *Antam Sanskar*- The Death Ceremony

Each of these ceremonies above have been explained in the following chapters.

Gurbaani explains that during the time the mother is pregnant, within her womb is a burning fire and the unborn child is in continuous meditation, praying to the Lord to allow him/her to escape from the womb.

*“Within the mother's womb, upside-down, the mortal meditated upon the Lord.”
(GGSJ: Ang 1026)*

When a pregnant woman has an ultrasound scan, she will find that the foetus is curled up and the hands are joined together. Additionally, the legs of the foetus are crossed, indicating the *smaadhi* (cross-legged position) pose that one sits during meditation. This symbolizes that the child is in fact in meditation upon the Lord. It is believed that the child promises the Lord that he/she will remember Him with every breath if it is allowed to escape. This continuous prayer within the mother's womb is the only thing that protects the child.



*“Extending His hand, the Lord protected you in your mother’s womb.
Renouncing the sublime essence of the Lord, you have tasted the fruit of poison.”
(GGSJ: Ang 805)*

Once the child leaves the womb, it is attacked by *Maya* (worldly illusions), and suddenly forgets the Lord and becomes absorbed in the materialistic world.

*“They have come into this world to meditate upon the One Lord.
But ever since their birth, they have been enticed by the fascination of Maya.
Upside-down, in the chamber of the womb, they performed intense meditation.
They remembered the Lord with each and every breath.
But now, they are entangled by things they must leave behind.”
(GGSJ: Ang 251)*

It is believed for at least six weeks from its birth, the child is said to be meditating upon the Lord’s Name. From six weeks onwards the child begins to have an awareness of the surroundings and the environment around them, in which he/she gradually becomes attached to. It is the duty of the parents of that child to ensure that the child continues to lead a spiritual and secular life and does not forget the Lord in meditation.

The birth ceremony plays an important part in every Sikh child’s life and has been created to keep the child’s consciousness and link with God for the rest of his/her life. The ceremony normally takes place in the hospital soon after birth and before the child has been breastfed by its mother. A *Granthi* (a priest) from the local *Gurdwara* is called to the place of birth. Here the *Granthi* will pour water into an iron bowl (*baata*) and mix sugar crystals (*Pataase*) with a *Kirpan* (a ceremonial sword). Whilst doing this, he will recite the *Japji Sahib* (the opening prayer within the Sri Guru Granth Sahib). Once completing the prayer, the *Granthi* will then perform an *Ardaas*, where he will ask the Lord to keep the child’s mind continually upon remembering the Lord and ask the Lord to bestow His protection on the child at all times.

The *Kirpan* is then dipped into the *Amrit* and the drops of the *Amrit* are placed into the child’s mouth. The mother witnesses the whole ceremony, and also drinks the rest of the *Amrit*. This signifies the sacred bond between the mother, the child and God. The mother is told not to cut the child’s hair, not to feed it meat, and to live by the Will of God. It has been said that some of these children can remember what they were in their last life up until the age of five. This *Amrit* provides protection for the child throughout their life.

Normally when choosing the name for the child, the *Granthi* will open the Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji randomly and the first initial letter on the left hand side of the Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji will be selected. A Sikh should aim to name the child with a name that has some significance to the Lord and some deep spiritual meaning, so that when the child is called, one remembers the Lord’s Name.

Birthdays should not be celebrated or be happy about. The yearly birthday that arrives is a constant reminder that one's life has decreased, and not increased. It is also a reminder that death can approach and is approaching the individual at any time, for everything that happens is in the Will of God.

“O mortal, you shall die today or tomorrow, chant, and meditate on the Lord within your heart.”

(GGSJ: Ang 1025)

Sikhs are meant to live and accept the Lord's Will. However, if one wishes to celebrate their birthday through offering prayers and thanking God for what He has blessed them with throughout the year and blessing them with another year, then there is nothing wrong with this.

Celebrating and commemorating the birthdays of the Sikh Gurus through prayer and meditation is permitted, for the Divine Light of Guru Nanak, the Messenger of God is still present within the Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji. The Divine Light never ceases, for it is part of God. Celebrating the birth of a Prophet or Messenger of God is a symbol of divine gratitude and reverence for the Lord's Messenger.



THE AMRIT SANCHAR (THE BAPTISM CEREMONY)



“Drink the Amrit nectar of the double-edged sword; accomplish the worth of your birth.”

(Bhai Gurdas Ji Vaaran)

The baptism ceremony, known as the *Amrit Sanchar* was initiated by the Tenth Sikh Guru, Guru Gobind Singh Ji in 1699 at Takhat Sri Kesghar Sahib in Anandpur. Guru Gobind Singh Ji created the *Khalsa* brotherhood, in order to create an individual, unique identity for his Sikhs. Guru Gobind Singh Ji declared within *Sri Dasam Granth* (The Divine Revelation given to Guru Gobind Singh Ji):

“I shall create my own Kingdom [the Khalsa],

I shall make the four social classes into One,

I shall cause all Sikhs to chant the Name of Vaheguru.”

It would be a brotherhood of the ‘pure ones’, who promote equality, love and devotion to all mankind. The *Khalsa* would also refrain from discrimination, thus bringing unity and stability in each individual’s secular life. This brotherhood would be created through an initiation ceremony by receiving the ambrosial nectar called *Amrit*. *Amrit* is a word derived from Sanskrit, which literally means ‘the nectar of immortality’; ‘a’ meaning ‘without’ and ‘*mrit*’ meaning ‘subject to death’. A Sikh who adheres to the principles and beliefs of the *Khalsa* and the teachings of the Sikh Gurus is not touched by death; thus the individual remains immortal and not a subject of death. As *Gurbaani* clearly explains:

“When the treasure of the Lord of the Universe is opened, those who are predestined, receive it.

The Guru has given me the one jewel, and my mind and body have become peaceful and tranquil.

The Guru has blessed me with the one drop of Ambrosial Nectar, and so do I become stable, unmoving and immortal-I shall not die.”

(GGSJ: Ang 612)

The *Amrit Sanchar* is seen as the second most important aspect of a Sikh’s spiritual life, for the initiation into the *Khalsa* brotherhood is seen as a secular commitment between the individual and God. Being initiated into the *Khalsa Panth* comes with many responsibilities of a holy and

honest living. A Sikh is required to continually uphold the Sikh identity, the beliefs and principles of the Sikh faith throughout their entire life.

The initiation ceremony takes place within a *Gurdwara* (Sikh place of worship) and in the presence of Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji. The room in which the ceremony takes place is enclosed, away from any disruptions and kept private. Five highly regarded members of the *Khalsa*, who are already baptised practising Sikhs, will perform the baptism ceremony. The original *Panj Pyare*, whom Guru Gobind Singh Ji had baptised himself in 1699 on Vaisakhi, were *Bhai Daya Singh Ji*, *Bhai Dharam Singh Ji*, *Bhai Himmat Singh Ji*, *Bhai Mokham Singh Ji* and *Bhai Sahib Singh Ji*.

Those who wish to take *Amrit* are required to have fully washed their hair and body, dressed with clean clothes and wearing the *Panj Kakkar* (Articles of Faith; ***Kes*** (unshorn hair), ***Kangha*** (a wooden comb), ***Kirpan*** (a ceremonial sword), ***Kara*** (a steel or iron bangle), ***Kachhera*** (knee-length shorts). The *Panj Pyare* (the 'Five Beloved Ones') will ask the congregation if they are ready for this commitment they are about to make and on agreeing that they wish to be initiated, the *Panj Pyare* will conduct the ceremony.

In brief, water and sugar crystals (*pataaseh*) are placed within an iron bowl (*bata*) and are stirred with a double-edged sword (*Khanda*) by the *Panj Pyare*. Each *Panj Pyare* will hold the *bata* and sit in a *biras* position (the right knee placed on the ground and the left leg raised). Each will recite one of the five morning prayers (see Sikhism and Spiritual Bliss: Prayer and Meditation for the five morning prayers). The initiates will stand and keep their attention on the *Amrit* until the preparation of the *Amrit* has been completed. Once completed the *Amrit* is now ready to be given to the initiates.

The *Amrit* is given to the initiates, who sit in the *biras* position in front of Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji. Firstly five handfuls are given to drink. After this the *Amrit* is sprinkled into the eyes and poured into the hair five times.

Each time the *Amrit* is given, the Sikh is to utter, "***Vaheguru Ji Ka Khalsa, Vaheguru Ji Ki Fateh***" (*The Khalsa belongs to the Lord, All victory belongs to the Lord*), keeping their focus on Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji. The remaining *Amrit* is sipped from the *bata* by the initiates until it is finished. This is done to abolish any discrimination and differences between the initiates. Additionally, it is to purify the body and is said to wash countless sins from past lives.

The *Panj Pyare* will congratulate the newly reborn Sikhs and are given the *Mool Mantr*, *Gur Mantr* and responsibilities as members of the *Khalsa* brotherhood, known as the *Rehat Maryada* (Sikh code of conduct).

Some of the instructions that the Sikh is given to refrain from are the five evils and the four cardinal sins, known as the *Char Kurehit*:

- ❖ ***Hookah***: to not consume any form of intoxicant (i.e. tobacco, alcohol, etc)
- ❖ ***Hujamat***: maintaining uncut hair and not removing any hair from any part of the body
- ❖ ***Halal***: to not consume meat that has been sacrificed in the Halal (Muslim tradition) or Kosher (Jewish tradition) fashion, rather maintain a vegetarian diet.
- ❖ ***Haram***: to not commit adultery, for this is seen as immoral and degradation of the individual's character

Additionally the meaning behind the *Panj Kakkar* is explained in the next chapter. The '*Panj Kakkar*' are not ritualistic items and should not be removed from the body at any time. The outer appearance serves a purpose of reflection. It reinforces the concept of the internal commitment to the Truth and to the True Lord God, Vaheguru.

A Sikh is required to preserve the identity at all times as intended by God. This means, Sikhs are expected to not alter their appearance by having body tattoos, any body piercings or colouring and removal of body hair for this opposes the Will of God. Sikhs do not believe in circumcision (the removal of the foreskin), whereas the removal or cutting of the foreskin in Judaism and Islam is apparently for hygiene purposes, as the foreskin is considered dirty and unnecessary. For Sikhs this is considered to be interfering with God's creation and doubting what the Lord has manifested.

All Sikh men are required to take the surname *Singh* (which means 'lion') and all Sikh women are required to take the name *Kaur* (which means 'princess'), removing the family name you were born into. Again this is to reject all distinctions of one's background and status and to reinforce a sense of equality amongst all sexes.

Once all this has been explained, a final *Ardaas* (a supplication/short prayer to God) and *Hukamnama* (Divine Order given by the Guru) will be performed to end the baptism ceremony.



SIKH IDENTITY: ARTICLES OF FAITH (PANJ KAKKAR)



The '*Panj Kakkar*' plays an important part in Sikh identity and reminds Sikhs that they are part of the *Khalsa Panth*. They act as symbolic articles in which a Sikh should live his/her life. They are not considered to be ritualistic items and are not removed from the body at any time.

***Kes*:** Unshorn hair from any part of the body. The distinct appearance of a Sikh is the *Kes* (uncut hair), which are considered as a gift from God. Sikhs believe that when God created the human form He gave *Kes* for a particular reason; whatever reason that may be, Sikhs believe it is extremely important that we do not in any way interfere with the Lord's creation, thus preserve this identity. The *Kes* are seen a symbol of strength and spirituality, which lie at the heart of the Sikh Dharma (way of life).

***Kangha*:** A wooden comb. Sikhs believe that keeping the hair clean and tidy is extremely important, therefore the *Kangha*, a small comb, is used to do this. It is kept in place within the *Kes*, as it symbolises the discipline needed to maintain and develop the spiritual side to one's faith and nature.

***Kara*:** An iron or steel bangle, which is worn on the wrist. The *Kara* symbolises many things. The main concept behind the *Kara* is that it acts as a handcuff. It is there to remind Sikhs of the commitment of upholding the Truth and that we should think before we act so that we do not commit any immoral mistakes. It also symbolises the spiritual bond that exists between God and the Sikh who wears it. The *Kara* signifies the oneness of God, who has no beginning or end, which is represented in the actual construction of the *Kara* itself. It also represents the concept of unity and equality which the *Khalsa Panth* represents, since all Sikhs are allowed to wear it, irrespective of their social status, colour or gender. Originally the *Kara* was used in battle and worn as protective armour for the arm and wrist.

***Kirpan*:** A sword normally made from iron, which symbolises power and bravery. The literal meaning of *Kirpan* means the arm which guarantees that just actions would be blessed by the Lord and that unjust actions are not carried out against the weak and defenceless, thus defending ones own honour. The *Kirpan* also symbolises both the spiritual and temporal way of living for a

Sikh to act accordingly when fighting for the Truth. The function of the *Kirpan* is not there to create fear or inflict any unnecessary violence upon others and should not be used irresponsibly.

***Kachhera*:** Long shorts, which are normally, knee length. This item of clothing was originally worn during battle and was seen as suitable and practical for going into battle, rather than the *Dhotee*, worn by Hindu men, which was seen as impractical. The *Kachhera* allowed easy movement and showed that Sikhs were prepared to take up arms to defend the Sikh Dharma and the Truth without having the fear of persecution. The *Kachhera* also symbolises purity and chastity, reminding Sikhs to refrain from pre-marital relationships, adultery and fornication.



THE DASTAAR (THE SIKH TURBAN)



“How handsome is your turban! And how sweet is your speech.”
(GGSJ: Ang727)

The Sikh turban, also referred to as the *Dastaar* (derived from Persian) is one of the most significant and visual representations of the Sikh faith. It is not only a symbol of the Sikh faith, but a symbol of spirituality and holiness. It is not simply a headdress worn by Sikhs, but is considered as a gift given by the Sikh Gurus; a symbol which carried an outstanding and exceptional appearance.

Traditionally in India, the turban was a sign of royalty, and was worn by high caste citizens, kings and princes. Low caste citizens were refrained from wearing a turban. During the time of the Sikh Gurus the turban was worn by the Gurus and the Sikhs. Guru Gobind Singh Ji made it mandatory that all Sikhs are to wear the turban, for it symbolized royalty, grace and provided a visual identity; an identity that would stand out from a crowd of billions.

Guru Gobind Singh Ji, the tenth messenger instructed that both men and women are to wear the turban, as a sign of equality, regardless of one's sex, caste and social status. Sikhs are deemed as ambassadors of their faith and have a commitment to their faith and God. The turban acts a *Taaj*, a crown. With the turban, the status of the Sikh is uplifted and highly respected.

“Purify what is impure, and let the Lord’s presence be your religious tradition.

Let your total awareness be the turban on your head.”

(GGSJ: Ang 1083)

There are many styles of turbans worn by Sikhs today. Traditionally, the turban that was worn by the Gurus and by great Sikhs was the *Dhumalla* (two turbans). The *Dhumalla* is a particular style of a turban worn by many Sikhs, which is revered with great respect and dignity. Blue, orange or white coloured turbans are the most common colours worn by Sikhs.



An image showing Sir Winston Churchill congratulating turbaned Sikh regiments of the British Army during the World Wars.

Around 83005 turbaned Sikh men were killed fighting for Britain in both of the World Wars.



PRE-MARITAL SEX AND ABORTION



Sikhism prohibits pre-marital sex and any form of a pre-marital relationship. Adultery is one of the four cardinal sins that a Sikh is instructed to avoid. In order for a man and woman to partake in any form of a sexual relationship they must be married according to Sikh marriage rites, which has been solemnised by Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji. A sexual relationship outside of marriage is frowned upon, as it degrades the high moral character of what a Sikh represents. Rather a Sikh is instructed to commence their marital relationship with their chosen partner. Sikhs are given the order to,

“Consider another’s man’s daughter as equal to their own daughter and to consider another man’s woman equal to their mother or sister.”

(Bhai Gurdas Ji; Var 41: Pauri 11).

This concept also applies to the opposite sex. Guru Granth Sahib Ji explains that the mind and body belongs to the Lord, not for sexual immorality.

“You are overflowing with sexual desire, and your intellect is stained with darkness; you are held in the grip of force or dynamic power.”

(GGSJ: Ang 93)

Marriage in Sikhism promotes the concept of love and commitment to one another as man and wife and the idea of two souls joining together as one through spiritual union. Sikhism believes that the sexual relationship between husband and wife is a sacred bond and should only remain within that marriage and not outside. There are many reasons as to why pre-sexual relationships are not permitted in Sikhism. It promotes a healthy lifestyle, which prevents us polluting and harming the body from sexually transmitted diseases (i.e. AIDS, HIV, Chlamydia, etc) contracted from previous pre-sexual relationships.

In order to prevent ourselves from being at risk of contracting any unnecessary diseases, Sikhism teaches us to put our sexual urges and emotions under restraint through some form of creativity. Sexual fantasies and desires hold the mind in its power.

***“The mind is deluded enters the house of Maya.
Engrossed in sexual desire, it does remain steady.”***

(GGSJ: Ang 222)

Sikhism teaches that sexual desire is a strong energy within the body, which is constantly overflowing with sexual thoughts and fantasies. It challenges the consciousness of the mind and the body of its own emotions; however it all depends on how the individual goes about controlling these sexual desires.

So how does one harness these sexual thoughts and emotions? Guru Arjan Dev Ji enlightens the individual that the only way in which these pre-sexual thoughts and emotions can be put under control is through meditating upon the Lord's name through full dedication and devotion.

“Sexual desire, anger and egotism lead to ruin, mediating upon the Lord, the Lord's humble servants are redeemed.”

(GGSJ: Ang 388)

Pre-marital sex is a strong feature of society and generally has an influence on the individual's choice of desiring a sexual partner, or a few or many, through short term or long term relationships.

Whether one indulges in a number of sexual relationships with different partners, there will always be a possibility of them being at a high risk of contracting a sexually transmitted disease. Sikhism teaches to not allow your sexual desires get the better of you.

We should not become the cause of our own destruction because we feel we need to comply with what the rest of society does or because our consciousness is telling us to do so. A common conception that many people have is they will always remain with a single partner and may engage in sexual activities with that person as an expression of their love before committing to marriage. However, one cannot be certain of what the future holds for them, as there is always a possibility that they may not remain with that partner any longer.

Sikhism teaches that everything is in the Will of God and there's nothing we can do to change that.

“Whatever happens is by the pleasure of Your Will, whoever understands this is naturally merged in the Lord.”

(GGSJ: Ang 1349)

Unlike some cultures and religions, Sikhism does not permit marriage and the act of incest between close relatives. Relationships and marriage should not be conducted between blood relatives. Sikhs should marry into the same faith, rather than marrying someone of another faith (i.e. a marriage between a Sikh and Hindu or Muslim should not take place, due to conflicting beliefs), as certain beliefs and practices do not coincide with the Sikh faith. A Sikh needs to have stability in their spiritual life, rather than having to compromise with contradicting beliefs, which will cause them to move further away from the Divine Truth. Additionally, Sikhism does not believe in the tradition of pre-arranging a marriage from birth, as Sikhs believe that fate and destiny lies within the Will of the Lord, which has been pre-determined before we have even entered this world.

“All things happen according to the Will of the Lord.

No one can erase the pre-ordained Writ of Destiny.”

(GGSJ: Ang 41)

Like many of the world religions, the Sikh faith does not believe in homosexuality, for this undermines the Sikh values of remaining a householder and the spiritual bond between a man and woman. Homosexuality goes against the Will of God and does not comply with the natural anatomy of conception and procreation that remains only with man and woman. On creating man, God also created a woman so that both existences could come together and carry on the natural breeding process. Although Sikhism promotes the spiritual bond between man and woman, this is not to say that if a homosexual couple were to join in matrimony, they cannot also live a life of spirituality and sing the praises of God together.

Whilst homosexuality goes against the Divine Order, the Sikh faith is open to all and promotes the concept of love of all beings and equality amongst the whole of humanity, regardless of who they are. Sikhism believes that one should have the freedom to express themselves and be able to express their beliefs and practices. If another's beliefs and practices are not in accordance to the Sikh faith, we do not discriminate against them, but tolerate and respect them.

***“First Allah created the Light; then by His Creative Power, He made all mortal beings.
From the One Light, the entire universe welled up. So who is good, and who is bad?”
(GGSJ: Ang 1349)***

Sikhism forbids the act of abortion, as it interferes with the Law and Order of God. As individuals we do not have the right to interfere with God's creation, therefore, destroying a life is considered to be a sin. In the case of a woman being pregnant from being raped, then the *Panj Pyare* would normally decide on a suitable decision.



SIKHISM AND MARRIAGE ANAND KARAJ



The Sikh marriage ceremony is called *Anand Karaj*, which literally means the ‘the Ceremony of Blissful Union’. Originally the *Anand Karaj* was first initiated by the third Guru, Guru Amar Das Ji, where the *Anand Sahib* (the ‘Prayer of Bliss’ written by Guru Amar Das Ji) was recited to solemnise the marriage. Consequently, the word *Anand* remained when the fourth Guru, Guru Raam Das Ji composed the *Lavan*, the wedding hymn for sanctifying Sikh marriages.

Sikhism does not believe in the concept of celibacy, as marriage and living as a householder is seen as a natural and a highly regarded lifestyle. Sikhism does not believe in pre-sexual relationships and does not permit the act of adultery; a sexual relationship between a man and woman is only permitted within marriage. Sikhism does not reject the use of contraception during marriage, as it is believed that it is the couples own choice on how they conduct their marriage and future of having offspring.

Additionally dowries, otherwise known as a *Dahj* are prohibited in Sikhism and should not be practised by Sikhs in any circumstance. The giving of a dowry is a Hindu marital tire, whereby payments of money or properties are given by the bride’s family to the bridegroom’s family, along with the bride. Dowries are seen as materialistic commodities, which are forms of greed and attachment. Marriage in Sikhism is not about worldly things, but the union of the souls.

“O My father, give me the Name of the Lord God, as my wedding gift and dowry.

Give me the Lord as my wedding gown, and the Lord as my glory, to accomplish my works.

*Through devotional worship to the Lord, this ceremony is made blissful and beautiful; the
Guru, the True Guru has given this gift.*

Across the continents and universe, the Lord’s Glory is pervading.

This gift is not diminished by being diffused among all.

Any other dowry, when the self-willed Manmukh offer for show, is only for egotism and a

worthless display.

O My father, give me the Name of the Lord God, as my wedding gift and dowry.”

(GGSJ: Ang 78-79)

The *Anand Karaj* is performed in the presence of Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji (Eternal Guru of Sikhs), wherein the bride and groom both sit in front of the Guru. Firstly the *Granthi* (priest) will begin by explaining the importance of a married life and the responsibilities that marriage brings. The emphasis is put on showing commitment to one another and to unite together as one soul to sing the praises and meditate upon the Lord's Name. The *Granthi* will also explain the meaning of marriage in Sikhism, wherein he/she will highlight:

“They are not merely said to be husband and wife, who sit together.

They alone are called husband and wife, who have one light (soul) in two separate bodies.”

(GGSJ: Ang 788)

Sikh marriage focuses upon the spiritual union of two souls, which focuses on the worship of one God and the spiritual link between the Beloved Lord and the individual.

On explaining the meaning of marriage, the father of the bride is asked to take the groom's *Palla* (scarf) and either tie it to the bride's headscarf or pass it in the hands of the bride, while the *Shabad* (Divine Hymn of the Lord); “*Pulai Thaidai Laagee*” is sung.

“I have totally discarded praise and slander, O Nanak; I have forsaken and abandoned everything.

I have seen that all relationships are false, and so I have grasped hold of the hem of Your robe, O Lord.”

(GGSJ: Ang 963)

This *Shabad* talks of abandoning falsehood and false relationships in this world and grasping the hem of the Lord's robe. The act of passing the *Palla* symbolises the first step to the spiritual union as man and wife together.

The main part of the ceremony will consist of the reading of the *Lavan*, which consists of four verses and focuses on the spiritual union of the couple and the divine worship of the Beloved Lord. Each verse is read aloud to the couple by the *Granthi* and after each verse, the *Raagi Jatha* (musicians who sing the Divine Hymns from Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji) will sing the exact verse, whilst the couple walk in a clockwise direction around the Guru.

After taking their first vow in marriage the couple will bow to the Guru in reverence before being seated once again to the second verse. This process is repeated four times in total.

Within the *Lavan*, Guru Raam Das Ji describes the four vows in achieving absolute blissful union with the Beloved Lord and the spiritual union of the two souls as one complete soul. The *Lavan* also signifies the sacred bond in accomplishing worldly and spiritual bliss.

The Four Marriage Vows taken are as follows:

- ❖ ***The First Round:*** The first round of the *Lavan* symbolises the importance of the commitment to family and social life in the community.
- ❖ ***The Second Round:*** The second round of the *Lavan* symbolises the love for one another and detachment from the world.
- ❖ ***The Third Round:*** The third round of the *Lavan* symbolises the two souls, which are filled with the Divine Love and meeting together to sing the praises of the Lord.
- ❖ ***The Fourth Round:*** The fourth round of the *Lavan* symbolises the final stage to married life, which is full of peace and harmony. It also signifies the union between the two souls which have become one and blended in union with the love for the Lord.

On the completion of the *Lavan*, the *Shabad*, “*Veeaa Hoaa Mere Babulaa Gurmukhae Har Paeeia*” is read.

“My marriage has been performed, O my father.

As a Gurmukh, ones whose face is towards the Guru, I have found the Lord.”

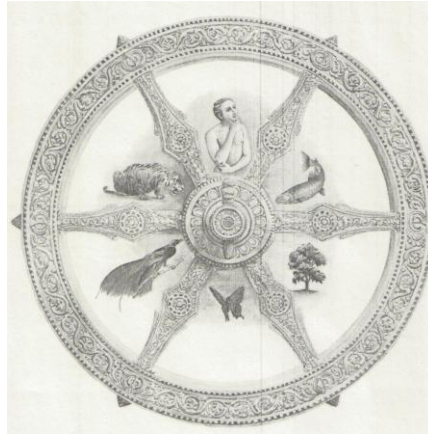
(GGSJ: Ang 78)

This symbolises that the marriage has now been sanctified and that the couple have received the blessings from the Guru to remain in holy matrimony.

The *Anand Sahib* is read to celebrate the spiritual union of the two souls.



THE REBIRTH CYCLE CHARAASI LAKH AND THE AFTERLIFE



The Sikh faith does not believe that the soul ends or dies once it leaves this earth. It is believed that the soul carries on entering many different life forms through the cycle of birth and death. This cycle of birth and death is known as the *Charaasi Lakh*. The soul is believed to pass through 8.4 million different forms of rebirth. Such forms can be of plants, snakes, ghosts, mammals, animals and humans.

“In several incarnations, you were a worm and an insect; in several incarnations, you were an elephant, a fish and a deer.

In several incarnations, you were a bird and a snake. In several incarnations, you were repressed as an ox and a horse. ||1||

Meet the Lord of the Universe – now is the opportunity to meet Him. After so much time, this human body was designed for you. ||1||Pause||”

(GGSJ: Ang 176)

The Sikh faith explains that the soul is connected to God and that the Divine Light resides in all His creation. In order for one to become liberated from the cycles of birth and death, they are instructed to remember the Lord in both peace and suffering. We are to follow and accept the Law of God (*Hukam*) and do noble deeds, known as the good karmas.

By following the Law of God and the Divine Teachings of Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji one can be fulfilled and find liberation, known as *Mukhti*. Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji explains that we have been so fortunate to be blessed with the human form and have the opportunity to now unite ourselves with the Lord.

The human form is seen as a jewel and the most superior existence created by God to distinguish between what is moral and what is immoral. Our minds can be instructed to the Will of God, but this can only be achieved through our consciousness and not our ego. One can only achieve liberation from the cycle of birth and death, depending on one's karma (actions). Our karmas are continually scribed by two angels, *Chitr* and *Gupt*; the conscious and subconscious.

“Chitar and Gupt, the recording angels of the conscious and the subconscious sing to You [the Lord]; they know, and they write, and on the basis of what they write, the Lord of Dharma passes judgement.”

(GGSJ: Ang 347)

The angels' record and scribe your good and bad actions and it is then on the Day of Judgment that *Dharam Raaj* (the Righteous Judge of Dharma) reads your actions aloud and passes judgement on your fate. One is punished or rewarded in the Lord's Court, according to their actions on earth.

By leading a life of sin and misdeeds will cause the soul to enter the lower forms of existence, which may cause the soul to be separated from the Lord again for many births and deaths. In order to achieve absolute Union with the Lord, we must lead a life of honesty and spirituality. The better our karmas are the better chance we have of being liberated from the cycle of birth and death.

***“Do only those actions, by which no filth or dirt shall stick to you.
Let your mind remain awake and aware, singing the Praises of the Lord.”
(GGSJ: Ang 199)***

This cycle of coming and going is part of the Lord's game, wherein He tries to test our sense of devotion in accepting His Will. Whether the Lord throws sufferance or peace at you, you must take it in your stride and accept it as the *Hukam* of God. Due to the seeds we have sown from our past life we have to reap the fruits in this life, hence why we are faced with challenges and hardships.

***“You shall harvest what you plant.
O Nanak, by the Will of God, we come and go in reincarnation.”
(GGSJ: Ang 4)***

What we claim to be suffering is in fact not actual suffering. Our pain and suffering is a symbol of purification on this earth. Our sufferance causes us to remember the Lord and accept that our suffering is due to past actions from previous births. For a Sikh to end the pain and suffering of rebirth we must accept and embrace the Truth and the Will of God; in addition to lead a life of good karmas through an honest and spiritual way of living.

Now is our opportunity to meet with the Lord after so births apart from Him, as *Bhagat Ravi Das Ji* explains:

***“For so many incarnations, I have been separated from You, O Lord; I dedicate this life to you.
Says Ravi Das; placing my hopes in You, I live; it has been so long I have looked upon the
Blessed Vision of Your Presence.”
(GGSJ: Ang 694)***

Sikhism teaches that there are five different realms of spirituality that the soul enters and ultimately leads ones to the Divine Truth. The Five Realms are as follows, *Dharam Khand*, the Realm of Dharma (righteousness way of living), *Giaan Khand*, the Realm of Knowledge, *Saram Khand*, the Realm of Spiritual Endeavour, *Karam Khand*, the Realm of the Divine Grace, and finally *Sach Khand*, the Ultimate Realm of Truth.

Dharam Khand is the first realm where the dominant attribute is *Dharma* (Righteousness). This place is said to contain many *Karam Bhoomis* (realms of actions), which are millions of worlds (including the world we are living in), heavens and hells and is the realm where actions are committed and reaped. This realm teaches that there are many more worlds similar to the one within our Universe. Within Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji, Guru Nanak Dev Ji explains:

“There are nether worlds beneath nether worlds, and hundreds of thousands of heavenly worlds above.”

(GGSJ: Ang 5)

Gurbaani further explains that within this realm, there are many different seasons and weeks, different cycles of day and night, wind, air, fire, water and nether regions. Various species of heavenly creatures abide there too.

It is also a realm which is governed by *Dharam Raaj* (the Righteous Judge of Dharma). Souls that have departed from this world have to go on a treacherous journey and are taken to him on Judgement Day by *Jamdhoot* (the Messengers of Death). The Messengers of Death have no remorse for the individual at the time of their death and will beat the soul out of the body. The remembrance of the Lord's Name will save you as you breathe your last breath.

“Without the Lord, there is no saving Grace. The Messenger of Death is cruel and unfeeling.”

(GGSJ: Ang 47)

As Sikhs we do not necessarily believe in the concept of one particular heaven and hell, as the Semitic religions do. Guru Nanak has revealed that there are countless heavens and hells, along with countless solar systems, underworlds, universes and galaxies. If a child dies straight after it has been born then where does the child go; heaven or hell? What was the point of its existence? Sikhs believe it is due to its past actions, its karma that the child was born for a certain amount of time. Once the child lived its karma, it then had to leave this world. Everything is in the Will of the Lord, and we cannot change this. *Gurbaani* explains that if one desires Heaven or Paradise, then it can be achieved on this Earth:

“Let Paradise be your practice of the Prophet's Word.”

(GGSJ: Ang 1083)

However, this can only be achieved through the practice of the Truth and following the Divine Teachings of the Lord. With the Lord's Name all riches and desires are obtained and granted to the individual. The concept of hell for a Sikh is anything that obstructs the individual from reaching absolute Union with the Lord and ceasing the cycle of birth and death.

Only here the soul's life actions are read aloud from birth to death, which have been recorded by *Chitar* (the scribe of public actions) and *Gupt* (the scribe of private actions).

“By their deeds and their actions, they shall be judged.

God, Himself is True, and True is His Court.”

(GGSJ: Ang 7)

Giaan Khand is the second realm where the dominant attribute is *Giaan* (wisdom/knowledge). Within this realm are countless types of winds, waters and fires that have not been experienced on this earth. Countless Demi-Gods of great beauty (i.e. Krishna, Brahma, Shiva, Indra, and Buddha) and Prophets, suns, moons, worlds and lands also reside there. Additionally, Guru Nanak talks of many ways of life, languages and dynasties of rulers reside here.

Sikhism believes that religions or faiths, which follow a prophet (e.g. Jesus, Krishna or Mohammed), can only go where the Prophet himself resides.

“In the Realm of Wisdom, spiritual wisdom reigns supreme.

The sound-current of the Lord’s meditation vibrates there, amidst the sounds and sights of bliss.”

(GGSJ: Ang 7)

Saram Khand is the third realm where beauty is the dominant; the place and atmosphere is indescribable. This has been said to be the foundation to move up to the upper realms. High intellect and intuitive consciousness is bestowed and shaped on the beholder so they can fully comprehend the power of *Sach Khand*.

“In the Realm of Humility, the Word is Beauty.

Forms of incomparable beauty are fashioned there.”

(GGSJ: Ang 7)

Karam Khand is the fourth realm, where power is dominant and is one of the only other realms, where souls reside permanently. All others are short-lived. Everything that happens within *Karam Khand* and *Sach Khand* are visible and audible. Spiritual warriors and devotees of many worlds, who have restrained their mind abide here, and are totally immersed in the Lord’s Name.

“In the Realm of Karma, the Word of the Lord is Power.

No-one else resides there, except warriors of great power, the spiritual heroes.”

(GGSJ: Ang 8)

Sach Khand is the realm where Truth dominates; there are many planets, solar systems and galaxies. It is a place where saints are absorbed in deep meditation. *Sach Khand* is particularly special because God resides here, but is simultaneously everywhere, like the sun which is stationary but its rays can be felt across the world. Here the Lord’s praises are sung and His Name is continually repeated. The atmosphere cannot be described. It can only be experienced. There is no anxiety, sorrow or status, but there is peace and harmony here. All who reside here enjoy this eternal ecstasy.

Those True Sikhs, who are true to their Guru and lead a life of good deeds, when it is time for them to leave this Earth, they are carried on chariots, robed within the Lord’s court, showered with flower petals and the sounds of drums, bells and conch shells are echoed in all four directions. They have no need to stand before *Dharam Raaj*, as he regards them as his own friend and does not put them on the path of *Jamdhoot*. Their name is known within all the realms to be one of great saints. Here many souls merge into *Vaheguru* and are forever with Him. The cycle of birth and death comes to an end for that individual.

“In the Realm of Truth, the Formless Lord abides.”

(GGSJ: Ang 8)



SIKHISM AND DEATH ANTAM SANSKAR



Sikhs believe that death is inevitable and is within the *Hukam* (Will) of God. It is seen as an ordinary part of life that God has created that we must accept. God is seen as the Creator, the Preserver and the Destroyer of all His own creation.

Sri Guru Granth Sahib explains to us that our total breaths were placed within our bodies from the beginning and that our day of death has been pre-ordained from birth. It is likely that a person, who has been engrossed in one type of pleasure or material possession during their time on earth, will think of that at their moment of death. For example:

“At the final moment, one who thinks of children and family, and dies in such thoughts, will be born over and over again in the form of a pig.”
(GGSJ: Ang 526)

Furthermore, this *Shabad* goes on to explain the other life forms that the soul may possibly enter if one's thoughts are not focused entirely on the Lord at the time of death.

“At the final moment, one who thinks of wealth, and dies in such thoughts, will be born over and over again in the form of serpents.
O sister, do not forget the Name of the Lord of the Universe.
At the final moment, one who thinks of women, and dies in such thoughts, will be born over and over again in the form of a prostitute...
At the final moment, one who thinks of mansions, and dies in such thoughts, will be born over and over again in the form of a goblin.”
(GGSJ: Ang 526)

The Guru has presented us with this Divine Truth to warn us of our karma and that we should not associate ourselves with *Maya* (worldly possessions). During the time of death, a Sikh should not think of friends, family or whatever materialistic things they are leaving behind for they are all false and do not go with you at the time of your death. Rather a Sikh should centre their focus and trust on contemplating upon the Lord's Name at their last moment. The Almighty Lord is one of total compassion and provides everyone with their mind's desires. A rebirth into a pig, for

example is the consequence of thinking of family at the dying moment, as pigs are known to have large families and many children. The above example is used to explain the urgency of spending this life wisely and not in useless worldly affairs. Guru Granth Sahib Ji advises that a Sikh should centre their focus on contemplating the Lord's Name throughout his/her life. If a person remembers the Lord throughout their life, then it is more than likely they will remember the Lord on their death bed.

“At the final moment, one who thinks of the Lord, and dies in such thoughts, says Trilochan, that man shall be liberated; the Lord shall dwell in his heart.”

(GGSJ: Ang 526)

We should look at death as part of life and that all must go one day. Our attachment to family, friends, and materialistic commodities are all false, for none of these things will go with the individual at their time of death. We should not be worried that we are going to leave our friends and family behind in mourning and distress. We must remember that one day they will all move on. Those tears will be held back, generations will come and go, new creations will come and old creations will go, then who will remember you?

“Beholding your family, you are lured away by emotional attachment, but when you leave, they will not go with you.”

(GGSJ: Ang 64)

The ninth Nanak, Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji explains that being attached to materialistic things causes the spiritual connection with the Lord to be lost. We must abandon all attachment to houses, household affairs, family and friends, as nothing remains in this world. He beautifully describes in his *Baani*:

“Like a wall of sand, built up and plastered with great care and effort, which does not last even a few days, so are the pleasures of worldly attachment.”

(GGSJ: Ang 633)

Sikhs are told that death faces everyone, that no-one can escape from this and all have to make this journey to God alone.

“Whoever has come shall depart; all will have their turn to leave.”

(GGSJ: Ang 474)

The bereaved are encouraged to not mourn in sorrow for the death of someone, as Sikhism teaches that every person is part of and belongs to the Lord and eventually they are going to have to return to Him in the end.

“Why do cry out and mourn for the dead? The Lord is, and shall always be.

You mourn for that person, but who will mourn for you?”

(GGSJ: Ang 418)

The main objective of this human life is to achieve absolute union with God, where stress is laid on the importance of remembering the Lord in meditation, honest living and self-service towards others.

“This human life has been given to you. Now is your chance to unite with the Lord of the Universe.”

(GGSJ: Ang 12)

The bereaved should remain calm and peaceful and keep their faith in God. The *Sukhmani Sahib*, which literally translates as the ‘The Pearl of Peace’ written by the fifth Guru, Guru Arjan Dev Ji, focuses on peace and tranquillity and proves to be a great consolation during the official period of mourning. The prayer is uplifting and brings comfort to the mind and soul. It helps the mourners to understand the importance of the Lord’s meditation and how one becomes immersed and fulfilled in His meditation.

“Meditate, mediate, meditate in the remembrance of Him, and find peace.

Worry and anguish shall be dispelled from your body.”

(GGSJ: Ang 262)

Before the deceased person is brought to the *Gurdwara* (place of worship for Sikhs) in the presence of Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji, the body is washed and clothed by the people (usually close family members) of the same sex. At the point of washing the body, the *Gurmantar* or *Mool Mantar* is chanted to offer support at this time of mourning. If the deceased person is a baptised Sikh, then the *Panj Kakkar* (Sikh articles of faith) should not be removed at any point.

Having been brought to the *Gurdwara*, an *Ardaas* is performed in the presence of Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji. Once the mourners and the deceased enter the crematorium, the *Keertan Sohila*, which is the evening prayer for Sikhs before they sleep, is read. This prayer is read for the peace of the deceased person’s soul and that the journey to God comes to no difficulty. The *Keertan Sohila* expresses what Sikhs believe about death, where the soul goes and that the soul is seen to never die.

By the act of good karma (deeds) and the worship and belief in One God, the soul will eventually be reunited with God. The soul may have to go through many birth and deaths before that union can be actually achieved.

“Whatever has been or shall become comes from you, O Lord.

No other than you can do anything at all.

We are united with You, when You unite Yourself with us.

Says Nanak, sing the Glorious Praises of the Lord, Har, Har.”

(GGSJ: Ang 176)

Sikhs tend to cremate the body of the deceased and the ashes are normally immersed in some river, which tends to be in India at a holy Sikh place of pilgrimage. For Sikhs the body means nothing. Bury it, burn it, throw it in the sea, do whatever you want with it; it has no avail to us for it will be reduced to dust one day. Just as materialistic things, the body will not go with us when we die.

“Some are cremated, some are buried and some the dogs eat. Some are thrown in the water and some are cast into a tower of silence. O Nanak, this much is not known, as to where they go and disappear.”

(GGSJ: Ang 648)

Sikhism is not concerned with the physical body, but the *Aatma* (the soul), which yearns to meet the Beloved Lord, *Parmaatma* (the God within you). Without the soul the body means nothing. When the individual dies, the soul is taken on a journey by *Jamdhoot* (the Angels of Death) to the court of *Dharam Raaj* (the Righteous Judge of Dharma), who will read the account of the good and bad deeds you have done in your life. However, upon this journey the soul is subjected to a nightmare of hells and longs to be in some form or shape. Being attached to the body it has just left, it makes the journey to *Dharam Raaj* more difficult for the soul. Therefore, by cremating the body, it destroys the attachment to the body and for the soul to carry on its journey without looking back. The body should consequently be cremated on the actual day or the day after.

Having cremated the body, the mourners come back to the *Gurdwara*, where the *Antim Ardaas* (final supplication) is performed, along with the completion of the *Sehaj Paat* (the reading of the Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji, which is completed within 10 days up to the day of the actual funeral). This is to provide spiritual support and consolation to the bereaved family and friends.

In addition, Sikhism forbids the erection of monuments or headstones for the dead person because Sikhs believe that it's not as if the deceased are going to look back and see what has been built in memory of them. It also closes the barriers of attachment to the dead.

Sikhism does not forbid blood or organ donation, for saving another's life is considered to be a great deed. The Sikh Gurus have taught all Sikhs that putting another person's happiness before your own (i.e. saving someone's life or making a situation better for another person) is an act of nobility and enforces the act of selfless service.

However, Sikhism does not encourage euthanasia or committing suicide, for life is a precious gift given by the Lord and we do not have the right to interfere with the cycle of birth and death or the Lord's Will. If the Lord chooses to take a life away then that is in His Will, not ours. Suffering is seen as part of one's karmas, which they have to face in this life. One should accept this as a symbol of purification on this earth and try to make their situation better for themselves by acting upon it through meditation and accepting the Lord's Will and Order.



SIKHISM AND INTOXICANTS/GAMBLING



For Sikhs, any use of intoxicants, such as alcohol, illegal or un-prescribed drugs and smoking of tobacco is prohibited. The abuse of such intoxicants is seen as sinful, purely due to the reason that these intoxicants are harmful and can cause prolonged illnesses.

The Sikh Gurus provided Sikhs with a healthy lifestyle, which was free from pollution and being under the influence of any intoxication that controlled the consciousness of the mind. The Gurus taught that we should not be the cause of our own destruction, thus one should refrain from anything that will bring harm and unnecessary illnesses to the body.

In some other religions and cultures certain intoxicants are widely used in ritual practices and are not prohibited.

The question commonly asked by people is why do people still take or abuse the use of intoxicants if they are known to be harmful. The answer to this is fairly simple. Due to psychological and physical problems that we face in the world today, people tend to feel insecure about themselves. This may be due to a number of reasons, such as peer pressure, wanting to be different, to get a moment of satisfaction or to enter a “utopian” world or trance other than the one they are living in, which the individual fails to be happy in.

The problem with such intoxicants is that the effects are only temporary, and once it wears off the individual is brought back to reality again and is faced with the pressures they were momentarily trying to escape.

Within Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji, the Guru teaches Sikhs that although one may become under the influence of intoxicants, the effect is only temporary. Once the effect has worn off you will enter reality once again.

Further common causes as to why people are taking to drug or alcohol abuse, for example is due to the burden of commitment to the real world and attachment to friends and family. Sikhism teaches that the point of being on this earth is to achieve spiritual union with God and that we should not show any attachment to the world, friends or family for they do not go with you when you leave this world. As the third Guru, Guru Amar Das Ji states:

“This family you see shall not go with you. They shall not go along with you, so why do you focus your attention on them? Don’t do anything that you shall regret in the end. Listen to the teachings of the True Guru-these shall go along with you”.

(GGSJ: Ang 917)

All have to make this journey to God alone. Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji teaches that we should renounce attachment and to fixate the mind on the lotus feet of the Lord. There is no need for the use of intoxicants for they are like poison, which takes over the mind and strays one towards the path of falsehood.

“The one who drinks the wine, his intelligence departs and madness enters the mind; he fails to distinguish between his own and others, and is struck down by the Husband Lord. Drinking the wine, he forgets his Lord and is subsequently punished in Lord’s Court. If it is in your power, refrain from drinking the false wine.”

(GGSJ: Ang 554)

Furthermore Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji explains:

“This human body is like a container, self conceit is the wine and desire is the company of drinking buddies. The cup of the mind’s longing is overflowing with falsehood, and the Messenger of Death is the cup-bearer. Drinking this wine, O Nanak, one takes on countless sins and corruptions.”

(GGSJ: Ang 553)

Abuse of intoxicants has ruined many lives, causing fatal deaths, causing serious health problems, destroying families and marriages. Guru Granth Sahib Ji explains,

“The human life is such a precious jewel, but is being lost in exchange for a mere shell.”

(GGSJ: Ang 156)

The shell which is empty, worthless and useless is similar to the abuse of intoxicants. They are a momentary thing. They set to ruin people’s lives and we lose this life for what, a moment of pleasure and satisfaction? All intoxicants and drugs are false; the true drug is the chanting of the Lord’s Name:

“The addict is addicted to his drug, and the landlord is in love with his land. As the baby is attached to his milk, so the Saint is in love with God.”

(GGSJ: Ang 696)

Alcohol

Alcohol is one of the common social drugs, which are widely available in pubs, clubs and off-licences. Alcohol affects the brain in two parts, wherein it can act as a depressant, which slows the individual’s actions and reactions and can also deaden the sensations within the body.

No one can be certain of how they can control their intake of drink; there is always a possibility that they can exceed their normal intake. The abuse of alcohol can lead to addiction, where the individual becomes so dependent on the intoxicant they begin to suffer from withdrawal symptoms known as DT (*delirium tremors*).

Alcohol has been linked to a number of accidents and other harmful effects, as follows:

- ❖ Road-accidents, murders and suicides.
- ❖ Violence and sexual or domestic abuse.
- ❖ Long term effects, which are harmful to the health, leading to brain and liver damage, damage to the stomach and digestive system.
- ❖ Impaired judgement and erratic behaviour.

Tobacco

Tobacco is a second common social drug, which can become a psychological depressant, seen to relieve emotional stress. Research has clearly shown that smoking can be extremely harmful and is strongly linked to the causes of cancers, such as lung and throat cancer.

Smoking can also lead to heart and lung diseases, such as chronic bronchitis, and individuals are more likely to develop asthma and other respiratory problems.

Other problems, which commonly cause damage and put innocent lives at risk, are pregnant smokers, who are carrying an unborn child.

The tar vapours within the tobacco smoke are also a common cause of these diseases and gum diseases and the rotting of teeth. Smoking is not only harmful to the individual but to passive smokers, who are at risk of developing lung cancer.

Many health officials around the world have introduced public bans in pubs, clubs and public places because of the increase in deaths and illnesses linked to smoking and passive smoking.

Illegal/un-Prescribed Drugs

Drugs leading to drug abuse are a third common social drug group, which has many devastating effects on the brain, causing physical and psychological dependency and damage to the body.

Drugs are seen as a way to make one become more relaxed, sociable and friendly and is a way of escaping the pressures of the real world, similar to alcohol abuse.

Common abuse of drugs, such as cannabis, cocaine, opiates, LSD (hallucinogens) and heroin are widely used and are extremely addictive and harmful. Drug abuse has shown to cause the loss of motivation, fatigue, hallucinations and prolonged illnesses, which can lead to death in very extreme cases.

Gambling

Gambling in Sikhism is forbidden and is seen as an unlawful act for a Sikh to commit for the individual falls into the trap of attachment to materialistic things. It is unlawful for a Sikh to acquire money through gambling, whether this is through sports betting, casinos, and lottery or scratch cards. Gambling can psychologically change the individuals behaviour and can be harmful to the individual and the environment that they reside in. Gambling can also change the behaviour of the individual, where the primary concern for the individual is focused on winning. Gambling has an uncertain outcome, where *Gurbaani* states:

*“Like the gambler losing the game of chance, you are held in the power of sensory desires.”
(GGSJ: Ang 212)*

Additionally, gambling distracts the individual from the Lord’s meditation and causes one to neglect their obligations towards their faith and practices as a Sikh.

*“Says Kabeer, think of doing good deeds.
In the end, the gambler shall depart empty-handed.”
(GGSJ: Ang 1157)*

Sikhs should also refrain from working in an environment, where intoxicants and gambling is concerned. It is also most certainly prohibited for a Sikh and is a sin to make a profit or an earning from these unlawful things.



IDOL WORSHIP AND FASTING



Sikhism is based upon the belief of monotheism, that God exists within all His creation and that it is God alone who is worthy of worship. It involves the understanding that there is no other than the One Primal Lord and all worship should be dedicated to God alone. Sikhs do not have any regard for or worship any of the Hindu deities.

The worship of God in Sikhism lies solely on the Lord's Name, not through ritual practices, such as idol worshipping and fasting. Fasts are permitted in Sikhism if it can improve one's health, but not for ritual purposes. By starving oneself in order to experience what the unfortunate are suffering will not benefit them. Rather one should share and provide what they have been fortunately blessed with and show compassion. We must understand that their situation is due to past karmas and accept this to be part of the Lord's Will. It is believed by idol worshipping and fasting, the Lord is not pleased nor does it bring one closer to God. In fact, it diverts them from attaining union with the Lord and leads one into spiritual darkness. For Sikhs, it is a sinful act to participate in such rituals.

The Divine Revelation, Guru Granth Sahib Ji, states that those who believe in such practices of idol worshipping are ignorant and deluded. Due to their ego and stubborn-mindedness, they cannot bring themselves to worship the Lord; thus attach themselves to the feet of idols.

"The ignorant fools pick up stones and worship them.

But when those stones sink, who will carry you across?" ||2||

(GGSJ Ang: 556)

The idol worshippers, who attach themselves to the idols and forsake the worship of the Lord shall find no place in the Lord's Court, but shall abide in the pitfalls of hell. Guru Nanak has declared that the worship of One God only is the most highest and purist form of worship.

"I worship and adore the perfect Lord God.

Perfect is His Name."

(GGSJ: Ang 295)

Images of Sikh Gurus or Prophets are prohibited in any shape or form. The reason being is that Sikhs believe the Lord is the sole Creator, who has fashioned this entire Universe, giving it all sorts of colours and shapes.

*“He painted the great picture of the world.
Forget this picture, and remember the Painter.
This wondrous painting is now the problem.
Forget this picture and focus your consciousness on the Painter.”*

(GGSJ: Ang 340)

The Lord is the only One who has the power to give shape and form to His Creation. Everything that has been created and manifested by the Lord is beautiful and perfect; only the Lord sees well. For one to imitate or make images of the Sikh Gurus or Prophets is indicating that one has the power to match the creation of the Lord. There is no other, who has the ability or is greater than the Lord.

*“There is no other Creator except the All-seeing Lord God.
The True Lord Himself is Infinite and Incomparably beautiful.”*
(GGSJ: Ang 1342)



SIKH FESTIVALS AND CELEBRATIONS



Sikhs have a number of special events and festivals marked in all months of the Sikh calendar. All festivals have some significance to Sikh history (i.e. Sikh martyrdoms) and all Sikhs across the globe celebrate these events with great devotion and delight. Normally all these celebrations are marked by an *Akhand Paat*, which is a non-stop continuous recital of the Divine Scriptures, Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji within 48 hours.

Below are some of the common celebrations marked in the Sikh calendar:

Gurpurb:

Gurpurb is a celebration connected with the Sikh Gurus. The *Gurpurb* marks the birth (*Avtar Purb*), death (*Joti Joyt*) and the day the Gurus were seated upon the throne or seat of the Guruship (*Gurgadhi Divas*).

Divali/Bandhi Shor:

This celebration coincides with the Hindu festival *Divali*. *Bandhi Shor* is derived from the two Punjabi words of ‘people’ (*bandhi*) and ‘release’ (*shor*). This festival marks the release and the arrival to Amritsar of the Sixth Nanak, Guru Har Gobind Sahib Ji from the Gwalior prison in 1621. Guru Har Gobind Sahib Ji was falsely imprisoned by Emperor Jahangir, but was released with 52 other princes, whom he released with his cloak, which had 52 tassels sewn onto it. The actual cloak worn by Guru Har Gobind Sahib Ji is present in India at *Gurdwara Sri Chola Sahib*. This festival normally falls in the month of October or November.



Vaisakhi/Khalsa Panth Di Saajna:

This is an important and significant day to all Sikhs, for it marks the day when the Tenth Nanak, Guru Gobind Singh Ji created the *Khalsa* and the *Amrit Sanchar* ceremony in 1699 at *Takhat Sri Kesgarh Sahib, Anandpur*. Sikhs were given an individual identity and set a framework of spiritual living. This festival falls in the month of April.



Hola Mohalla:

Hola Mohalla is a festival connected with Guru Gobind Singh Ji. It is a day where thousands of Sikhs gather at *Takhat Sri Kesgarh Sahib, Anandpur* and display their archery skills, horsemanship, swordsmanship (*Gatka/Shastar Vidya*) and wrestling skills. Many of the Sikhs, known as *Nihangs* (the True warriors) will come dressed in traditional clothing, tie huge turbans and arm themselves with masses of weaponry. This festival falls in the month of March.



Pehla Prakash Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji:

This festival marks the day when Guru Arjan Dev Ji first compiled and installed the *Aadh Granth* at *Sri Harmandar Sahib, Amritsar* in 1604. This festival falls in September.

Gurgadhi Divas Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji:

This festival marks the day when Guru Gobind Singh bestowed the throne/seat of the Guru to *Aadh Granth* before leaving to his heavenly abode in 1708. It was here at *Takhat Sachkhand Sri Hazoor Sahib, Nanded* where Guru Gobind Singh Ji announced to all Sikhs that from this day, the Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji (the Divine Revelation of God) will be the eternal embodiment of the ten Sikh Gurus and there shall be no other physical Sikh Guru. This festival falls in October.



Shaheedi Guru Arjan Dev Ji & Shaheedi Guru Tegh Bahadur Sahib Ji:

This festival marks the martyrdom of the Fifth and Ninth Nanak, Guru Arjan Dev Ji in 1606 and Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji in 1675. Both Gurus were martyred for not embracing Islam and were tortured as a result of this. Guru Arjan Dev Ji's martyrdom falls in the month of June and Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji's martyrdom falls in December.

Shaheedi Char Sahibzadeh:

This festival marks the remembrance and martyrdom of Guru Gobind Singh Ji's four sons in December. His elder sons, Baba Ajit Singh Ji (aged 18) and Baba Jujhar Singh Ji (aged 14), who were martyred fighting in the Battle of Chamkor in 1705 against Mughal tyrants. Guru Gobind Singh Ji's younger sons, Baba Zoravar Singh Ji (aged 9) and Baba Fateh Singh Ji (aged 6) were bricked alive and beheaded by Islamic extremists for not converting to Islam in 1705.





Aadh Granth: The first Divine Revelation compiled by the fifth Guru, Guru Arjan Dev Ji.

Aatma: The soul.

Akaal Purakh: Timeless being whom never dies (referring to the Almighty Lord).

Akhand Paat: Continuous reading of the Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji within 48 hours.

Amrit: Immortal nectar given by the Guru.

Amritvela: The ambrosial hours of the early morning.

Anand Karaj: The Marriage of Bliss.

Ang: Literally means 'limb'. This word is referred to the pages within Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji, as a sign of respect and an act of recognising that each letter and page is a limb of the 10 Sikh Gurus.

Antim Ardaas: The final supplication to the Lord read during the last rites of the deceased person.

Ardaas: A supplication to the Lord, after prayer.

Baani: The Divine Revelation/Prayer.

Bata: An iron bowl.

Biras: A sitting position, where the right knee is placed on the ground and the left leg is raised.

Char Kurehit: The four cardinal sins.

Charaasi Lakh: The 8.4 million rebirth cycle.

Chitr and Gupt: The scribing Angels of the conscious and subconscious.

Darbar Sahib: A place where Sikhs gather to pay their respects to Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji.

Dasam Granth: Scriptures written by the tenth Guru, Guru Gobind Singh Ji.

Dasam Dwaar: The tenth gate situated at the top of your head.

Dharam Raaj: The Judge of Righteousness who all have to face on Judgement Day.

Dharma: The righteous way of living according to the Divine Order.

Granthi: A Sikh priest.

Gur Mantr: The mantra given by Guru Nanak ~ Vaheguru.

Gurbaani: The Divine Revelation of the Lord, revealed through Guru Nanak.

Gurdwara: The House of God; a Sikh place of worship.

Gurmukh: One, who is God-centred.

Gurpurb: A day marking the birth, death and coronation of the Sikh Gurus.

Guru Granth Sahib Ji: The Eternal Guru of all Sikhs, containing the Divine Revelation of God.

Guru: A teacher or guide.

Haumeh: Ego.

Hukam: The Will of God.

Hukamnama: The Divine Sermon taken from Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji randomly.

Kaljug: The Dark Age.

Kaur: The surname given to the female Sikh, meaning Princess.

Khalsa: The brotherhood of the Pure Ones.

Khanda: A double edged sword.

Kharam Bhoomi: Millions of worlds, where actions are committed and reaped.

Langar: Free distribution of food.

Lavan: The wedding hymn, written by the fourth Guru, Guru Raam Das Ji.

Manmukh: One, who is self-centred.

Maya: Worldly illusions/materialism.

Miri Piri: The symbolising of the temporal and spiritual aspects of the Sikh faith.

Mool Mantr: The first Divine Revelation given to the Messenger, Guru Nanak by God on his call.

Mukhti: Liberation/salvation.

Nihangs: The True Superior warriors of the Khalsa.

Nirgun: God is seen as transcendent, he is above and beyond creation.

Nishaan Sahib: A flagpole erected outside the Gurdwara.

Nitnem: Daily prayers.

Panj Chor: The five thieves (Lust, Anger, Greed, Attachment and Ego), which distract one on the path to salvation.

Panj Kakkar: The 5 articles of faith, bestowed to Sikhs in 1699

Panj Pyare: The 'Five Beloved Ones.'

Parmaatma: The God within you.

Pataase: Sugar crystals.

Pauri: A stanza.

Raagi Jatha: Musicians, who sing the praises of the Lord.

Sahibzadeh: A son of a Master.

Sangat: The congregation.

Sanskar/Sanchar: Ceremony.

Sargun: God's Divine Light is within all His creation.

Sehaj Paat: The reading of Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji completed in a longer period of time.

Shabad Dhun: Celestial sound of the Lord's Divine Word.

Shabad: The Divine Word of God.

Shaheedi: Martyrdom.

Sikh: A learner.

Singh: The surname given to the male Sikh, meaning Lion.

Smaadhi: A meditative pose.

Swaas: Breathing.

Trikutee: The third eye, situated between the eyes and forehead.

Vaheguru: O Wonderful Lord, who brings one out of darkness and into the light.